

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS**

*Re: Second Periodic Review of the Commission's Rules and Policies Affecting the Conversion to Digital Television*

Today the Commission takes another step to advance the digital transition. As I have before, so will I commend again today my colleagues' commitment to move the transition forward. I will vote to approve the item.

But I want to focus for a moment on what is missing here. I want to focus, again, on what is missing in our work to advance the digital transition. When we launched this second periodic review a year and a half ago, we asked questions about the public interest obligations of DTV broadcasters and committed to address these issues promptly. And, remember please, it's not that we were just beginning last year to consider how the digital migration will serve the public interest. Rather, we were refreshing a record in Commission proceedings that dates back to 1999—five years ago. Yet, today, we move forward to consider issues from the second periodic—and still no action on the public interest.

The vast majority of television stations are already beginning to broadcast in digital and hundreds of stations across the country are multicasting. And yet, those broadcasters do not know what they must do to discharge their public interest obligations on their new channels. Worse, viewers are equally in the dark. We really can't delay any longer in bringing some certainty for both broadcasters and the public.

The digital transition holds the promise of reinventing free, over-the-air television by providing consumers new and valuable services and offering broadcasters new and valuable business opportunities. High definition programming, multicasting and datacasting will transform the television experience. There is a potential for this new digital reality to be a real boost for localism, competition and diversity. But if the American people are to realize the full benefits of DTV, we have to call the public interest issues forward and accord them the high priority they deserve. I urge the Commission to work together to complete action on these important public interest issues just as we have worked together on the mechanics of the digital transition.